

*Be patient...
and keep
on praying*

April 3, 2024 - May 12, 2024



**"...and God heard them, for their prayer
reached heaven, his holy dwelling place."
2 Chronicles 30:27**

As we continue to pray for our senior pastor (known or unknown) let's remember to praise the Lord for all He has done in and through the membership of Englewood. When we think about the rich history of Englewood, we see how God has provided. In time, we say fifty-nine years this year. But He sees it as having been forever, since it was all part of His plan to set this ministry in the Englewood section of Rocky Mount from the beginning. Thank the Lord for those saints who were obedient to His call to "follow me" when they left the comfort of an established church to begin a new ministry on the west side of the city. Praise the Lord for the leadership He has put in place over the years to lead us through good times and yes, some difficult times as well. Thank Him for His faithfulness to never leave us or forsake us. Rejoice in knowing that He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

Jesus said in Matthew 21:22, "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer." It's not a guarantee that we can get anything we want simply by asking Jesus and believing. After all, we can all say we wanted something at one time that we now know wouldn't have been good for us if we got it. God will not grant wants that will hurt us (thank You Lord!) or violate His own nature or plan. In other words, it's not a blank check. Our prayers must be in harmony with the principles of God's kingdom. When our prayers are in line with God's will, He is happy to grant them. Pray that our prayers for our senior pastor are in line with the will of the Father,

"Then I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding." Jeremiah 3:15

Wednesday, April 3, 2024 - Is anyone reading this a fan of waiting? Come on now. Let your "Yes" be "Yes" and your "No," "No." There's probably a resounding "No" answer to that question. None of us like to wait. For those with children, remember how you couldn't wait for your first child to start walking? When the child did start walking, we'd put them in a play pen or one of those wind-up swings (many thanks to whoever invented those) to control their movement. Ever think about Jesus, our Lord and Savior waiting? The Old Testament is filled with the promises of the Messiah. The Scripture says he would come as a baby (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6), that he would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and that he would die a horrible death (Isaiah 53). Jesus knew all of this and yet he waited to come, knowing he would be born into a world of sin. From the cradle to the cross, his purpose was to die. From Genesis through Malachi, our Savior waited. His life, death and resurrection are all pictures of faithful waiting. Everything about Jesus' before He stepped out of Heaven was about waiting. He waited until the time was exactly right. God makes use of everything to accomplish His will. He came in this way to show us that "... nothing is impossible with God." (Luke 1:37). God had a perfect time for His Son to be born, "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." (Galatians 4: 4,5). Whether we are still waiting for a senior pastor to be revealed or not, we can all take a lesson from Jesus when it comes to waiting. God made sure that His word given long ago through His prophets, would come true. His people had to wait for their Messiah, but God sent Jesus at the perfect time. Pray that God has sent or will send our next pastor at the perfect time.

Thursday, April 4, 2024 - Once Jesus was born, He waited 30 years to start his ministry (Luke 3:23). Thirty was considered the age of full maturity. A 30-year-old was considered physically and mentally suitable for a high degree of responsibility. "Joseph was thirty years old when he entered the service of Pharaoh king of Egypt..." (Genesis 41:46). The Book of Numbers identifies Levite men eligible to serve beginning at age thirty. Saul became king at age 30 (1 Samuel 13:1). "David was 30 years old when he became king ..." (1 Samuel 5:4). Thirty was the perfect age. Jesus, the Master Teacher, knew that folks might disregard his authority and teaching had he started his ministry any earlier. He wouldn't have wanted any age-imposed barrier to hinder the reception of Messiah's teaching. It was the perfect time. After his baptism by John, Jesus said, "...Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:15). Age was right, baptism had taken place. He had resisted the temptation of the devil. Now he started to grumble and complain about the crucifixion He knew was coming. Not anything close. He begins to preach the good news of the kingdom, heal the sick, raise the dead and heal every disease among the people. He was waiting on His death, but in full court press mode to get the message that salvation had come to the people, all while dealing with a group of disciples who He said had little faith. Jesus doesn't teach us that a time of waiting means to come to a stop. It's time to press on. If our new pastor is here or not, let's take a lesson from Jesus and press on. We're waiting for His return. Let's do like He did in His time of waiting and continue sharing the "good news."

Friday, April 5, 2024 - Even before Jesus started his public ministry He stayed behind after the Feast of the Passover when he was 12 years old. Mary and Joseph anxiously searched for him. The Bible says he was found by his mother in the temple courts. Jesus responded, "...Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" (Luke 2:49). It would be another eighteen years from that event until He started his public ministry. Can you just for a minute try to imagine being "...despised and rejected by men..." being "...pierced..." for someone else's transgressions, and being "...led like a lamb to the slaughter?" To know this is coming and still be about His Father's business. The Bible says, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." (Matthew 4:23). All this time, our Savior knew He would end up on a cross and His focus was on us. Regardless of where we might be in the process of seeking a pastor, let's take a lesson from Jesus and remain focused on what our mission is here in our community and around the world. Our team has been focused on seeking the Lord for guidance and direction to fulfill their mission. Jesus, knowing what He would go through as the Savior of the world was a great example of what to do while waiting. He pressed on.

Saturday, April 6, 2024 - So often, during periods of waiting, we do just that, we wait. We wait for a prodigal child to return. We wait for packages to arrive at our homes rather than go to the store to find things. We wait in the car for someone else to bring us our groceries. We've become accustomed to, and accepting of, waiting when things are convenient for us. It's when we're waiting for something we dread or something that we want to happen quickly that we begin to get anxious. All the time Jesus was conducting His ministry, He was waiting for His date with the cross. His ministry didn't cease just because He was in a period of waiting. In this one statement, Jesus

reaffirmed His commitment to do what God wanted, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42). The agony of the cup of wrath He would endure wasn't only about the crucifixion but, even worse was the total separation from God that He would have to experience to die for the sins of the world. Jesus was teaching us that during times of waiting, we pray, and we trust in the Creator. Waiting isn't an interruption, or a hurdle, or an obstacle in God's plan, it's built into His plan. So, as we're called to wait, whether for a senior pastor or on a personal matter, let's wait well by anchoring our hope in the One whose promises are sure and whose character never fails. "Jesus shouted to the crowds, 'If you trust me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me...'" (John 12:44). What a great promise to hear from our Savior. Lord, we are trusting You to provide for Englewood Baptist Church - not in our strength, but in Yours.

Sunday, April 7, 2024 - So, Jesus has been waiting to come to earth. He waited to start His ministry until He was 30 years old. He waited for three years to have his date with the cross. He knew all the reasons why. We don't always know the reasons why things happen the way they do. We wait for an explanation, we ask why, but often the answer doesn't come. Another lesson from the Master Teacher - Jesus was intent on doing what the Scripture said because scripture said exactly what God wanted to be done. It's not always about us or me. Prior to the crucifixion Jesus said in Luke 22:37, "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors' (quoting from Isaiah 53:12), and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." Jesus came to finish God's work of salvation. With the words, "...it is finished" (John 19:30), the complex sacrificial system ended because Jesus took all sin upon himself. Those three words He stated just before "...bowing his head and gave up his spirit" are words we can find great comfort in, no matter what we are going through or waiting on. Because we believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, we can live eternally with God and escape the penalty that comes from sin. Because He waited, because He prayed and sought the Father, because He knew the prophecies had to be fulfilled, we have before us an example of patience like no other. Jesus didn't rush or push the timetable; He didn't fall for Satan's traps, and He waited for the Father's perfect timing. "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently." (Romans 8:25). As we wait patiently for our next senior pastor to be revealed, remember the examples of Jesus waiting patiently to fulfill His mission and pray for our team as they continue their work.

Monday, April 8, 2024 - Ever been on a long trip and could hardly wait to get back home? You missed the comforts of your home. It was a great trip, one you had been looking forward to for a long time, but it was good to get back home to familiar surroundings. Jesus knew the importance of His trip to earth. He knew the trials and tribulations He would go through. He knew the horrible death He would suffer. Yet, it was a trip He was not discouraged to make. Many times, in the Gospels He said, "I have come." His trip was a short, but urgent assignment. "I have come...to do the will of my Father. (John 6:38) and "I have come to save the world." (John 12:47) clearly describe the purpose of His mission. Perhaps Jesus looked forward to His return home, but His death, burial and resurrection did not complete His trip. He waited to return home. The Bible says, "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty

days and spoke about the kingdom of God.” (Act1: 3). And John said there were many more miraculous signs done in the presence of the disciples. Jesus didn’t leave His followers in a lurch; He didn’t abandon them suddenly. Because He cared for them and wanted to provide them comfort and assurance about His resurrection, He waited to return to Heaven. No rush to get home. He took time to prepare them for the next steps. God has used our past to prepare us for this period we are in. His provision of men of God throughout the history of Englewood has prepared us for the future, whether we continue to wait or have welcomed our new pastor. God promises to never leave us or forsake us. There is no greater example than that of Jesus spending those 40 days with his followers. Hey, that Jesus is the same Jesus who is walking with us today. What a Savior!

Tuesday, April 9, 2024 - Patience. It’s something that seems to be in short supply in today’s environment. People always want to get to the next thing. We have, in some cases, taken the joy out of seeing something finished because we are in such a hurry to get to the next thing. Jesus waited to come to earth. He fulfilled His duties – preaching the good news, healing the sick, raising the dead and the dreaded date with the cross. He waited in a borrowed tomb for three days. Once He had risen, He spent forty days with his followers before returning to heaven where He “...sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty of heaven...” (Hebrews 8:1). There He serves as our advocate, the mediator between us and God. He makes perpetual intercession before God for us. Back home. Sitting at the right hand of the Father. Mission accomplished, right? Part of the mission accomplished, but now comes another waiting period. “So, Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.” (Hebrews 9:28). Look at the phrase “...eagerly waiting...” We have eagerly awaited the identification of our next pastor, but we are really, eagerly awaiting the return of our Lord (no offense pastor). If we can imagine Jesus’ assignments, there are stages of completion throughout His ministry. We may still be waiting for our next pastor. If we are, let’s follow the example Jesus has set for us. He followed God’s plan. Jesus asked a lot of questions during His ministry, but hardly ever did He ask “When?” As He waits to return to earth a second time, He continues to intercede for us, not bothering to think about when, but waiting for the Father to give the command to return. Not as a baby, but as the King of Kings. Think of Jesus patiently preparing the table and interceding for us at the right hand of the Father. He’s waiting to return. God the Father leans over and says, “Son, go get my children” (song, Midnight Cry). The waiting is over. Now it doesn’t matter who you are, if you’re saved, that’s exciting! Lord, while you wait for the command to return, we ASK that you reveal who our next pastor will be and if you have already done that, we thank you. If he hasn’t been identified yet, we pray that we will follow the examples of patience and waiting that You have given us.

Wednesday, April 10, 2024 - “Don’t stop praying, don’t stop calling on Jesus’ name, keep on pounding on heaven’s door. And let your knees wear out the floor. Don’t stop believing, cause mountains move with just a little faith, and your Father’s heard every single word you’re saying. So, don’t stop praying (emphasized).” Those are lyrics from a song by Matthew West titled “Don’t Stop Praying.” Wherever we may be in the process of searching for a senior

pastor, we can't stop praying. If our senior pastor is here with us, we still can't stop praying. There are a few places in scripture where it looks like Paul "asked" the people to pray for him, but on most occasions he simply "told" them to pray. In 2 Corinthians Chapter 1, Paul writes about how God is the God of all comfort. Paul is reflecting on the hardships his team endured in the province of Asia. Paul is reminding the people that when there is nothing they could do to help themselves – they had to simply rely on God. "On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many." (2 Corinthians 1:10,11). We can't stop praying regardless of where we may be in the process. It's not a stretch to think of ourselves as always being in a process. A process of growing in our faith and a process of sharing our faith with others. So, don't stop praying, don't stop growing in the Lord and don't stop sharing!

Thursday, April 11, 2024 - Tradition has it, and it's been written that James, the earthly brother of Jesus, "was so frequently found upon his knees, begging forgiveness for his people, that his knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God" (Erickson). Think about that. James became known for his body being marked by his dedication to prayer – Old Camel Knees. If we were to feel our knees, how would they feel? Like that of a baby or that of a camel. It's a convicting thought, isn't it? We may have gotten so used to just tossing out a prayer request that we've forgotten that when we pray on our knees it's a sign of humility. It gives us the appropriate sense of who we are and the appropriate sense of who God is. "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care." (Psalm 95:6,7). Our physical posture is not as important as the position of our heart. Scripture doesn't require that we kneel, but there is a beauty and a reverence in kneeling that recognizes God as our creator, our sustainer, and our provider. Scripture records that Daniel, "...Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God..." (Daniels 6:10). So, if you're physically able to kneel before the Lord today as we pray for our senior pastor, let's follow the examples of Daniel and James and bend our knees as we worship and submit our request to Him today.

Friday, April 12, 2024 - So often we depend on our own skills and abilities when life is going well or seems easy. Things are just humming along, then the unexpected. It may be a medical diagnosis or a financial issue. Regardless, it is unexpected. We turn to God when we feel unable to help ourselves. We've been in a season of prayer for a senior pastor. If he's here or not, we need to be in prayer for him and his family. This is most likely unexpected for him as well. Our dependence on God is a realization that we really are powerless without Him. We really are in constant need of His touch in our lives. He is our source of power. Hey, try to unplug that computer you may be using today. Yes, it's got a battery, but that's going to run down too without an eventual power source. But if we leave it plugged in, the computer receives a constant source of power. We receive God's help by staying connected with Him through our prayers. It's an attitude of dependence. This attitude will drive us to God when we have a need or a problem. It's a daily thing really, not just during times that we experience the unexpected. Here's a verse that we can all learn from Paul, "Brothers, pray for us." (1 Thessalonians 5:25). Let's continue praying for "us"

(our team, our pastor, our membership) as we walk through this time together.

Saturday, April 13, 2024 - Remember as the seasons change, and you wake up that first morning in early fall and there is frost on the windshield of the car. You weren't expecting it. It came as a shock. You had to run out to the car and crank it up to de-ice the windows, or you might have had a can of spray stuff, or the rare, nearly extinct window scraper. Or you might even have a newer car that you can stand in the house, point the fob, and start the car. In either case, the frost was unexpected, but you didn't throw up your hands and let the frost stop you from moving forward. That's where we were a few months ago. Something happened that was unexpected. So, what did we do? We moved forward. That's what we do when we unexpectedly find frost on the windshield. We adjust and move forward. As we move forward as a congregation let's remember that God loves us more than we can imagine. His will goes beyond our thoughts. Unexpected to us, but not to Him. When we look beyond our circumstances and situations and see only God, the unexpected situations don't seem as formidable. Here's a thought: The Lord wants us to respond to unexpected, inconvenient needs we can't meet with fervent, persistent prayer remembering His eagerness to provide for us. "Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; he will never permit the righteous to be moved." (Psalm 55:22). Hey, the only way we can stop the unexpected frost on the windshield is to pull our car under a covered shelter. The Bible says God is our shelter, "God is our shelter and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble. (Psalm 46:1) Thank you Lord for covering us during this time of searching for a senior pastor. The Lord is our shepherd, our shelter, and our strength.

Sunday, April 14, 2024 - We often wonder why things happen the way they do. We wonder why things don't happen the way we think they should. When we reflect on different seasons of our life, we think, "if only" or "had I done this" things could have turned out in a way that would have been better. It could be said (with a great deal of confidence) that we never look back on our lives and ask ourselves how we could have made things worse. With 100% certainty, we always think it could have been better. This is hard, but do you ever think this is how God might have planned it? It's the things that we didn't expect that really get our minds racing when we reflect. We go through all the "why" and "what if" questions. We may come up with an answer that satisfies us in such a way as we can say, "Oh, yea, I see it now." God may reveal the reason over time, but He doesn't have to. As Dr. Lawless said in a sermon back in January of this year, "He's God, but he's not obligated to answer my questions." So many times, we never fully understand the reason for an outcome. That's where the faith that we have is what we hold on to. Paul wrote, "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13). There's the word, "trust." It's right there in the middle of the Bible, "It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man." (Psalm 118:8). As we continue in this season, let's don't look back, but focus our thoughts on what God is going to do with the people He is assembling at EBC. Let's thank Him today for all He has done through the community of Englewood Baptist Church – past, present, and future.

Monday, April 15, 2024 - Ever think about all the unexpected things that have happened in your life? Each one of us can recall events in our lives that we did not expect. It could be personally, professionally or it might even be in our church life. It's been said the most difficult time in our lives is the loss of a loved

one. No one disputes that. All of us have a story about our respective loss. And everyone who has a relationship with Jesus has a story about how their faith in Him and their relationship with their church family got them through the pain of the loss. We often hear that a death was unexpected. It could be sudden. The circumstances surrounding the loss may have been unexpected. There may have been no time for a family to prepare. But here's the final answer. Death is expected. Yea, that sounds morbid, but don't tune out yet. Life may not end in the seventy or eighty years like Moses describes, "The length of our days is seventy years-or eighty, if we have the strength..." (Psalm 90:10), but we can all expect our lives to end because "they quickly pass, and we fly away," (Psalm 90:11). Some in our congregation have lost children in the past year or so. There was no preparation for the loss. The timing was unexpected. Some of our members have gone to be with Jesus after living well past what Moses describes as a long life. In every instance our church family has rallied to pray and provide support. In this season at Englewood, we have united our voices to pray for our search team in our search for a senior pastor. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 12:26, "If one part of the body hurts, the whole body hurts..." Remember when you heard the news about a family losing someone when the circumstance was other than a long life? For most, our first action was to pray. That might have been the only support we could provide, but those prayers were felt by those families in their time of need. That is what we can do to continue to provide support for our search team and for our new pastor – Pray!

Tuesday, April 16, 2024 - God is with us every season of our life. Whether it's our personal life or our church life, He remains with us. When we face the unknown, we can trust that He is in control and working out every situation for our good. It's important to remember that regardless of where we might be in this pastor search process that we stay focused. "See that what you have learned from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us – even eternal life." (1 John 2:24,25). All of us want to know who our next pastor will be but take comfort in knowing that God knows, and He will connect all things together when the timing is right. Wherever we are in this season, it's important that we remain faithful in our prayers for God to provide. It's important we continue to pray for our staff pastors and our administrative staff. Ask the Lord to guide them during this season. And remember the words of Jesus, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you." (John 15:7). Apart from Him our efforts are unfruitful. Lord, we are totally dependent on You to show our team who our next pastor will be. Thank you in advance for all You are going to do through this season at Englewood.

Wednesday, April 17, 2024 - Remember the first time you ever crossed the road? You might have been with a parent, or another adult and the command was to always look both ways before attempting to cross and to walk straight across. Whoever the person was probably held your hand and told you to walk and not run because you might fall. When everything was clear you held tight and walked across the road to the other side. Success. Then came the first time you ever crossed by yourself. We looked and looked and looked both ways. If we saw any kind of movement, we waited and waited and waited. We waited until we didn't see anything at all to make sure

we had lots of time to cross without running. Even then our instinct was to not tarry, but to move at a steady pace. That's what we should pray for our team. Move forward at a steady pace, but don't run. As we gained experience, we would sometimes run across the road. But to run meant disobedience. It also meant we didn't have confidence that there was enough distance between us and the danger of a speeding car to get across the road safely. "Stand at the crossroads and look...ask where the good way is and walk in it..." (Jeremiah 6:16). Like the people of Jeremiah's day, our team and our church may be facing the same decision - going God's way or choosing a path of our own. Pray that we are walking in God's path as we face this time of decision. Praying that we don't or haven't rushed to get to the other side but looked carefully and walked (straight) in the path of the Lord. Just like the person who walked us across the road the first time, God is with us. "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you or forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Thursday, April 18, 2024 - Think back to the time when you were 15 years old. One of the highlights of that time was the excitement and anticipation you may have felt waiting to take driver's education and get a permit with the goal of getting a driver's license. Remember how it felt like that time would never arrive? Here's the irony in all that youthful anticipation. Once we got the license, we dreaded going back to renew them in four years. We have no idea where we might be in the process of searching for our next pastor as of this writing. He may already be here, or our team may still be searching. God may have chosen to have us wait on Him a little longer. Either way we can rejoice in the fact that God is still God and we're not. If we don't have a pastor yet, thank God for shutting doors and giving our team the eyes of Balaam's donkey to see any dangers in front of them as they pray and research individuals who are being considered. If our pastor is with us as of this writing, let's thank God for His faithfulness in hearing and responding to our prayers. "...great is your faithfulness..." (Lamentations 3:23). It's hard to see sometimes, but either way we should be praising the Lord for His faithfulness at this time at Englewood. It's a day by day trusting. Just before verse twenty-three of Lamentations, Jeremiah writes that the Lord's compassions (with an "s") never fail, and they are new every morning. Trusting in His great compassionate faithfulness day by day makes us confident in His promises for the future. "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as your trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." (Romans 15:13). So, let's pray today with that same excitement and anticipation we had when we were 15 years old and waiting to get those driver's licenses.

Friday, April 19, 2024 - "The secret things belong to the Lord our God..." (Deuteronomy 29:29). What a statement. There are things God doesn't reveal to us. Now we all know that's true, but it still doesn't do away with the fact that we all want to know stuff. We all have a one-word question that is born in all of us. "Why?" If you've been around children much, you know that you may say something like, "the sky is blue." It's a statement of fact, you can look up at it and see it. If the child knows their colors, they know it's blue, but they still ask the question, "Why?" And if you can answer them, their next question is "Why?" Most of the time our final answer in any situation like this is "Because." There are secret things God has chosen not to reveal to us. Suppose God gave you the opportunity to ask Him one question that you've always wondered about (realistically, it probably wouldn't be the one about why He created gnats).

Maybe it would be about the unexpected death of a family member, or why a particular event in your life happened when it did. In our hypothetical, let's say God answers your question. Let's say it was about the timing or circumstance surrounding the death of a family member and God's answer is "because I wanted to spare that person some pain that you weren't aware of." Would that be good enough or would you like to ask a follow up question? Most of us would ask "Why?" a second time or maybe "What?" It could become a never-ending cycle. But because He's God and we're not, He spares us all the details because our finite minds can't understand the infinite aspects of a Holy God. It's about trust. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding..." (Proverbs 3:5). Let's trust God to reveal who our next pastor will be in His perfect timing and not get hung up on the "Why," "Who" or "When" of the things that "belong to the Lord our God."

Saturday, April 20, 2024 - God is the creator; He is all powerful. He has a plan, and He will carry it out. "In the beginning God..." (Genesis 1:1). We live in a world that has a hard time with those four words. Once we understand that, it makes our ability to trust Him much greater. Yes, we still have questions, but that statement at the beginning of God's Word is really the most basic understanding we must accept to have faith in the rest of the Bible. During this journey of searching for a new pastor, we have all learned to wait, to trust and to put our hope in the Lord. We wait for God to reveal our new pastor through our prayers and the work of our search team. Hopefully, we are learning that waiting on God is what's best for us. Trusting Him leads us to a quiet, calming hope. We certainly don't want to get ahead of Him. It would be dishonest to say that we don't have questions, but let's praise the Lord for the work of the search team. They have been faithful to keep us informed about the process through their verbal and written updates. Habakkuk had a lot of questions for the Lord. In fact, the Bible records four questions in the first couple of verses (Habakkuk 1:2,3). The Lord answered him. Habakkuk asked more questions (remember yesterday's reading?). In some translations this second round of questioning is highlighted as "Habakkuk's Second Complaint." We know Habakkuk was complaining about all the wickedness during the time and how he thought the Lord was being slow in His response to it. We may think the Lord is being slow in His response to our prayer for Him to reveal a senior pastor if we are still in the search phase. But God! What a phrase. We're coming to an exciting part of the Lord's response to the prophet's complaints. The Lord answered Habakkuk like this, "For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it, it will certainly come and will not delay." (Habakkuk 2:3). It's about waiting for the appointed time of the Lord. Whether it's the first verse or the last, "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen" (Revelation 22:21), we live by trusting in Him and His plan. So, it is if we're still waiting, "Though it linger, wait for it..."

Sunday, April 21, 2024 - When you bake a cake, you do it one of two ways. You can assemble all those ingredients like your grandma did or you can go to the grocery store and buy some of that boxed mix. Either way there is a recipe or directions to follow to have a cake at the end. Separately all the ingredients mean nothing, but when you put them all together, out comes something wonderful. Leave one ingredient out and all bets are off. Somebody had to cook the cake for the first time. Even the boxed mix. Someone working in an industrial kitchen somewhere has taken the time to determine what else you

you put in the boxed mix, how long you must whip it or mix it, and how long you must cook it (determined by a coated or non-coated pan). Here's the point. Each member at Englewood is an ingredient in what God is doing through His church. God is assembling all the ingredients to continue building His church. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I (Paul) planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." God's work involves many different individuals with a variety of gifts and abilities. No superstars, only team members. Our senior pastor is one of the ingredients God will use to grow His church. Ask the Lord to continue to grow Englewood Baptist Church, not just in numbers, but in spiritual growth in each member. Let's celebrate the goodness of God and the many blessings He has provided for EBC. Just for the record, you can go to Smith's Red and White and buy an eight-layer chocolate cake. It's not quite as good as grandma's but it's close.

Monday, April 22, 2024 - Some of you may remember popping popcorn when you were a child. You got out a pan, poured some oil in it. You'd turn the eye on top of the stove on and wait for the oil to heat up a bit. Then you pour in the uncooked popcorn. Then you'd shake the pan back and forth over the eye on the stove and in just a little bit the corn would start popping. Oh, yeah, don't forget the lid. After the popcorn went in the bowl, there was one final step before eating. It had to be salted while it was still warm. Go back and look at all the steps. It didn't just happen. Now we skip all those steps and just stick a bag in the microwave, time it for two minutes and wait for the buzzer to go off. Either way we cook it, we must wait for just the right time. Rush it and you'll have a bunch of kernels left, overcook and it's burnt. Charles Spurgeon's wife, Susannah said, "The Lord has strewn the pages of God's Word with promises of blessedness to those who wait for Him. And remember, His slightest Word stands fast and sure, it can never fail you. So, my soul, see that you have a promise underneath thee for then your waiting will be resting and a firm foothold for your hope will give you confidence in Him who has said, "They shall not be ashamed that wait for Me." He is "...Immanuel – which means, "God with us". (Matthew 1:23). That same God who Isaiah prophesied about in Isaiah 7:14 is the same God who Matthew wrote about through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is the same God, who right now is stirring in the heart of our new pastor and the same God who is guiding the faithful at Englewood through this next season. Just like there were steps to popping popcorn, whether the old way or the new, God is orchestrating the steps of Englewood, whether its waiting for or rejoicing with our new pastor. We can have confidence that God is with us, and He will let us know when the time is exactly right.

Tuesday, April 23, 2024 - "Evening, morning and noon I cry out in distress, and he hears my voice." (Psalm 55:17). What a wonderful scripture to rest on. There is no time during a day that we can't cry out to the Lord. We might be in distress as David was in the writing of this Psalm. We might be in one of the happiest times of our life. Or it might be one of those bright sunny days when everything in life seems kind of vanilla and we are just coasting along. Regardless of what's happening, we can be assured that God is always there, and He hears our voices as we cry out to Him, in unison to provide our next senior pastor, or if he's already here, to bless his work here at Englewood. Think about how that may sound to the Lord. Different voices, different tones, different pitches, but all in harmony asking Him to provide a senior pastor for EBC. Prayer allows us to communicate with a Holy God. Not just to submit a list of wants, but the

opportunity to really communicate with Him. To share our deepest, most personal thoughts, to seek forgiveness for our sins. "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:1,2). God doesn't ignore, excuse, or tolerate sin as though it didn't matter. It's a challenging thing to deal with, but before we go to God with our requests, we should examine our hearts and see ourselves clearly. That requires prayer as well. In Psalm 139:23,24 David asked God to "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting." Before we go to the Lord today to ask God to reveal our next pastor or to thank Him for providing a pastor to lead us, ask Him to do some exploratory surgery to make sure "...he hears my voice."

Wednesday, April 24, 2024 - For those who like baseball, most of the action happens between the pitcher and catcher and those strategizing in the dugout. Technology has made a difference in the game as we know it today. But the nuances of the game are in the cat and mouse between the pitcher and batter. Will it be a curve ball or a fast ball, a slider, or a sinker? The ones who know what the pitch will be are the pitcher and the catcher. The batter is trying to guess what the pitcher will throw in each situation, depending on the balls and strikes count. When the catcher gives the pitcher the sign, he has a choice. The pitcher has the option to throw the pitch or to "shake it off" and ask for the catcher to call for a different pitch. So, again, what has that got to do with looking for a preacher? All those signs and shaking them off is about deception. Trying to fool the batter, by throwing something he's not expecting. Pray our team will not be deceived by any candidate who is not the man God has ordained for Englewood. The pitch the pitcher decides to throw may look as big as a beach ball to the batter when it leaves the pitcher's hand, but just before the ball gets to the plate, it takes a nasty dive to the left or right. It looks like a fast ball, but it was a curve ball. Batter fooled, strike three. "We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright. We'll see it all then..." (1 Corinthians 13:12 MSG). Pray that our team sees as clearly as a batter with a good eye. Pray they won't be deceived, but like a batter on a hot steak, they recognize everything God is revealing during the sermon reviews and interviews that our team is conducting. Remember those folks in the dugout? They are integral to the success of the team as well. That's us – all part of the team. "Two are better off than one, because they have good return for their work..." (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

Thursday, April 25, 2024 - When did He break His promise? When did His kindness fail? When did He lose His power? When did His mercy change? Never has, never will. Our God is still the same. Our God is still in control. These are lyrics from the song, "My God is Still the Same" by Sanctus Real. When we think about the God that has led our team and our membership through this time in the history of Englewood, He's the same God who "created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). He's the same God who led the Israelites out of Egypt. The Bible says, "During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink." (Deuteronomy 29:5,6a). Imagine that. Just the fact that their clothes and sandals didn't wear out is

amazing. Right before Moses made those statements that the Lord had given him to say to the Israelites, he reminded the people of all the Lord had done to Pharaoh. They knew about all the miracles and wonders that God had done prior to the Exodus. But they hadn't noticed God's care for them along their daily journey. The Lord said through Moses, "I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God." (Deuteronomy 29:6b). The same God who cleared the way for the Israelites and who cared for them along the way is the same God we are calling on today to bless our new pastor and our church. Let's pray that we have a mind that understands, eyes that see and ears that hear all the ways that God has and will take care of us. Pray that we would always recognize God's hand in the smallest details of our journey.

Friday, April 26, 2024 - There was a line in the movie *Magnum Force* where Detective Harry Callahan (played by Clint Eastwood) said, "A man's got to know his limitations." It's a great quote, but there's a difference between understanding our own limits and understanding what God can do through us – if we're willing. We've been praying for God to reveal our new pastor to us, and it has required a true commitment by our membership to bring this to God at least one time a day. In Ephesians, Paul writes about the armor of God. After putting on the armor, Paul uses the word, "And." See there's more than just the armor, there's real protection that comes through prayer. "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests." (Ephesians 6:18). But Paul isn't finished. He tells them, "...be alert and always keep praying..." It's a warning to not get lazy in the most important thing we can do – prayer. In prison, Paul was undiscouraged and undefeated. No matter the time it took, he remained ready for battle. See, on the battlefield a soldier always has an offensive weapon. If he fails to use it against the enemy, the enemy will eventually defeat him. It's the same type of thing that the devil will use to distract us from praying steadfastly for our pastors and our church. When we get lax, laziness creeps in and we don't use our most powerful offensive weapon – prayer. Waiting is tough. Other life things happen and what was a priority on our prayer list keeps getting bumped down. Here's what we know – this won't happen in our own strength. Harry said a man must know his limitations. He's right, but Jesus said, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Corinthians 12:9). We all have limitations in different areas of our lives, but our limitations are not cause for rest. Instead, let's turn to God and let Him work through us. Remain faithful in prayer for our pastor. "This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful in Jesus." (Revelation 14:12)

Saturday, April 27, 2024 - Do you remember when nurses wore white, and their hats were part of their uniform? Police officers wore hats. Men and women dressed up to go to work. Coats and ties, dresses, or skirts. Then came pant suits, for men and women. Then came the casual day. You remember, it was normally a Friday thing. Folks could dress down a little bit to go to work. Men didn't wear a tie and ladies would wear more comfortable clothes. That one day has turned into everyday (in some cases). Ever seen folks wearing what looks like pajama bottoms out in public? Nothing wrong with casual, but the word has been redefined. It didn't happen overnight, but gradually. Society began to accept a lax dress code instead of the more buttoned down, professional look. You know that we can get casual in our prayer life and our Bible reading as well if we're not careful. We miss a day here and there and

before you know it; you've gone a week without communing with God. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jeremiah 29:13). We must be intentional. If we aren't intentional then we become casual in our time with God. How much time we spend with God directly correlates to how equipped we are to deal with trials and tests when they come. During this time of seeking or receiving a new pastor, let's not get casual in our commitment to pray for God to reveal His plan for Englewood. God is preparing us for a "new thing" with Him at the center.

Sunday, April 28, 2024 - When we think about the journey we are on, it doesn't stop with the identification of a new pastor. We are children of God, serving the God who made all the stars. There's a song by Mercy Me that says "the stars don't shine unless He tells them to." We can often get distracted with questions that don't seem to have an answer. More specifically, the answers may be crystal clear, but not what we want to hear. But we shouldn't get paralyzed by the things we don't know. In Pastor Branch's message back in February 2024, he said it's a life journey we're on to get a better relationship with God so that we can deepen our understanding of the faith, hope and love that only He provides. We serve a God who conquered the grave. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:14, "I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that men will revere him." There is a greeting that's not used as frequently today as in the past that goes something like this, "What it is, what it was and what it shall be." Scripture answers that question like this, "Whatever is has already been and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account." (Ecclesiastes 3:15). We may have a senior pastor by now, but if our team is still searching, it doesn't change the fact that we are serving the God who was and is and will always be. "Shout to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture." (Psalm 100:1-3).

Monday, April 29, 2024 - Pray for all our pastors to have the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of David, the strength of Samson, the faith of Daniel and the leadership of Joshua. These are challenging times in our country. Satan is alive and well and he will use every tactic he can to attempt to divide us. He sees a weakness right now with either the absence of a senior pastor or the newness of our senior pastor. We've been blessed to have a pastoral staff who have led us through this time and can be here for our new pastor to assist him in learning about Englewood. So, pray for our pastoral staff as they build a relationship with our new pastor and as he begins to love and learn them like we do. We need to pray daily for them. They need to be one of those "top of the list" prayer requests that we don't move down the list. World events are showing us that Christians here in the United States are being targeted like never before. It's not a matter of if, but when groups will try and attack us for our beliefs, and we will need strong pastors with strong leadership skills who can stand in the face of this evil and call it what it is. It's called protecting the flock. The Bible says, "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." (Isaiah 5:20). And do you know where we should be? Standing right alongside them when called to do so. See, those who stand back or don't stand at all make statements like this, "They should do something about that." Well, that's true, but it's only a half truth. If an individual recognizes a need, he or she

should make some type of effort to remedy it. To not do that is called "dumping." In other words, some people like to tell you about a problem, but they don't have a solution and they make no effort to help improve the situation. Result – dumping. "Learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause." (Isaiah 1:17). Every member of Englewood has a gift. Some may have many, but we all have at least one. Let's commit to use our gifts for the Lord over this next year to make a statement in our community. You remember the sign back during the World Wars. The government made a sign with Uncle Sam on it. Remember what he was saying? He was saying "I want you!" It was about serving. Well today, Englewood wants you as a prayer warrior, a teacher, a nursery worker, a special needs assistant, a greeter, a deacon, or a prayer partner for our staff. Let's stop talking about what needs to be done and become part of the solution by using the gifts that God has given us. We can start by loving each other.

Tuesday, April 30, 2024 - Our new senior pastor will have been vetted and background checked by our search team long before we know who he may be. Some will naturally try to find something they don't like about him. His voice is not loud enough. He's kind of stiff when he preaches. He moves around too much on the stage. I don't like the translation of the Bible he's using. He didn't speak to me, or he didn't remember my name. He didn't introduce himself to me. Here's a good one, "I was sick and, in the hospital, and he didn't come to see me" (from the guy or lady who doesn't go to Connect group and rushes in and out of church when he or she comes). Yes, it's true, that's just human nature. But that's not an excuse for that type of behavior. You know what those kinds of things are? They are tricks of Satan to get us distracted from the main reason we join a fellowship - to worship the Lord. Satan will use all his tricks to try and divide us. He will attempt to drive wedges in places that may be soft and inviting to his tricks. We must be especially watchful during this time, especially if our new pastor is here, because we may feel like we've been through the hard stuff, and we can relax. NOT SO!!! We can't relax our praying, our service, or our commitment. The Bible says, "...and do not give the devil a foothold." (Ephesians 4:27). Here's a novel idea; walk up to the new pastor and introduce yourself. That's not being forward. But remember he may have to remember 2,000 names and all you must remember is one, and maybe his wife's name. It's our responsibility to help him make the transition and love on him and his family to show them they made the right choice in following God's call to Englewood. The Bible says, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." (1 Timothy 5:17).

Wednesday, May 1, 2024 - Do any of you remember those games we use to play as kids when we went outside? We'd all get in a circle to choose up teams and everybody would stand with their hands out in front of them with their fists balled up and somebody would start the chant - "My mama and your mama was (were, for the city folk) hanging out clothes. My mama socked your mama right in the nose, what color was the blood?" The kid it landed on could yell out any color. Let's say green. G-R-E-E-N. If the kid landed on your hand after spelling green, you put that hand behind your back and start it all over again. And we kept doing that until one kid was left with one hand out. He was the winner. Such a simpler time. Aren't you glad our search team has gotten deeper than just having folks hold their hands out and do "My mama..., or

"Eenie, meenie..." or "...one potato, two potato..." to select a pastor. They didn't just pick one, they've prayed and sought the Lord's direction. God himself is a planning, creating, working, God who puts His all into everything He does and expects the same from us. "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..." (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Our team has sacrificed their family time and some of their work time to pray together, to attend training sessions, to review sermons and conduct interviews. Why? Because they know that this duty, this service, this calling for them is as important to them and the membership at Englewood as the calling of the new pastor is to him and his family. In simple terms, "they want to get it right" as humanly possible. They accepted this call because they love the Lord, and they love Englewood Baptist Church. "I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me." (Proverbs 8:17).

Thursday, May 2, 2024 - Many of us may have a device in our home that we can yell out to, and it will answer our questions. It even has a name. It may even alert us when a package has arrived. It's been said you can even get some kind of adapter for your lights and once you get into bed you can tell the device to turn off the light (you don't even have to clap your hands). There's always that little bit of doubt or concern that the device might be listening to what we're saying. Who would think such a thing? A man shared a story about talking about Pop Tarts in his home one night and in just a brief time, an advertisement for Pop Tarts displayed on his computer screen. Now that's different. It is easy to say we "love" all this modern convenience, but none of those things can replace the direct connection we've always had with God. "I love the Lord, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy. Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live." (Psalm 116:1,2). Another translation of that verse reads like this, "...because He bends down to listen..." Take just a minute to imagine that. As we pray, in unison, for our next pastor, (identified, present, or not) God has been bending down to listen. He has turned His ear to us. It's a picture of a daddy bending down to listen closely to his son. God is so responsive that we can always reach out to Him. Just before Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, he looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I know that you always hear me..." (John 11:41,42). We do know that the device in our homes is listening all the time because it answers as soon as we call its name. But it won't work without a power source. But God, who is our power source, answers like this when we call out to Him, "...I will not in any way fail you, nor give you up, nor leave you without support..." (Hebrews 13:5 AMPC). Precious Lord, thank you for bending down and listening to our prayers. We trust you to meet all our needs.

Friday, May 3, 2024 - Today, let's take just a little time to remember a part of Englewood's past. It's in the past, but very much in the present as well. It's a lesson on faith and about a legacy of one man. Many in our congregation today didn't know Pastor Steve Lewis, but the stories told about him reveal a man of great faith in the Lord. "And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you... that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart..." (Deuteronomy 8:2). For those that didn't know Pastor Steve, he was a humble man and a loving man by all accounts. He had the ability to meet a person once and remember their name. He had a vision for Englewood Baptist Church to be a lighthouse in the community. His desire to see people come to the Lord led him to see the need for a FAITH evangelism program in our church. He had a vision for the property across the road before we knew it

as City of Refuge (before God provided the land for us). The story has been told that he said, "if it would save one lost person, we would build a McDonalds at the entrance to the church." He listened to the Lord. The leadership at Englewood had decided that the first building on our current property would be a sanctuary style building. Plans had been drawn. Everything was approved, but Pastor Steve had a vision for what we now know as the Lewis Building. He envisioned a building that could be used for many purposes rather than just once a week. He saw children and their families playing Upward basketball, a community evangelism tool. People might not come to church, but they would come to watch their child play ball. Children would hear the gospel at their practice sessions and parents would hear the Gospel during halftime of the game. The whole family together, hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That same building served as the hub for feeding families and providing essential items for flood victims after Hurricane Floyd. He knew the importance of prayer and started a twenty-four-hour prayer room. He had a heart for missions as we've seen in a picture from a group of Indigenous people in South Asia. Perhaps his greatest example for us was his response to the news that he had cancer. He didn't quit. He dealt with the future of the church by securing Brother Donald Pope to serve as our senior pastor during a time of transition. There's the remembrance of him preaching to a large crowd at the Dunn Center, sitting on a stool carrying a chemo bag. His legacy lives on through us. There's a story of him being asked why this cancer would happen to him of all people when God was using him in such a powerful way. His response, "Why not me?" We know during his darkest hour Pastor Steve was faithful to the Lord our God because God had always been faithful to Pastor Steve. It would be fair to say that God knew what was in his heart, because God was his heart, "...that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Ephesians 3:17). That's what Pastor Steve would want for us and that's what we pray for our new senior pastor.

Saturday, May 4, 2024 - "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1). Faith provides a strength that is often difficult to explain, but we know it's what we lean on when things are not clear. It's like trusting there is pavement around the curve on a dark road. It's like light leading us out of the darkness. Hey, remember what a map is? We learned how to read those and then "map" out a course of travel when we were going somewhere we weren't familiar with. AAA used to provide trip guides that we could follow. We put faith in the folks that prepared the map and published it for our use. Now we put faith in that woman that speaks to us through the GPS (talk about a back seat driver!). Faith keeps us going when we're not sure we can continue. Without faith we would probably give up when we face difficult or uncertain times. But, when we trust in the Lord and believe that He will lead us, there is nothing that we can't walk through together. It's the power of a shared faith, the power of community. We may not understand God's big plan, but we should have faith that He has one fit for us. "We know that God works all things together for good..." (Romans 8:28). Let's use the power of community in prayer. Trust that God has the right man for us and have faith that He will reveal him at the right time. "Therefore, the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore He exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for Him." (Isaiah 30:18).

Sunday, May 5, 2024 - We all remember what we experienced during the time of COVID. There were other things that were spreading as quickly as the actual virus. Pessimism, fear, and discouragement. Those things are contagious. They are bred out of the unknown. In this world we face times of uncertainty, but the certainty of God's provisions leads to thoughts of peace. Here's what we know. We need a senior pastor. If God hasn't revealed the man for the position as of this writing, let's not panic. In His perfect timing He will put all things together. There is another thing that is contagious as well. Encouragement. When we hear of someone discouraged by the length of the search (if that's still the case) let's encourage them to remember that the same God who provided the people to start this wonderful ministry we know as Englewood Baptist Church is the same God who will lead us into the future. He sees us and knows exactly what we need because He is faithful. He is active in the life of Englewood, and we trust Him to provide. He is "Jehovah Jireh" – "The Lord will see to it." Our God is our provider; He will see to it that we get what we need. "He tends his flock like a shepherd; He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart..." (Isaiah 40:11). There's no fear in that picture, only the protection and provision of a caring Shepherd.

Monday, May 6, 2024 - "Somebody told me that someone said that something was going to happen somewhere the other day." It's like, "my brother's mother's sister's husband's second cousin told me _____ (you fill in the blank). So, when you hear a statement like that, picture this reaction – head cocked a little to the left, eyes wide open and mouth formed to say something like, "Duh." Now, how many of you have ever been told a story that begins like that? Here's the truth of that, the person telling the story has no idea what's going on. But because we want to know things, we'll often listen to the whole story before we realize the person really doesn't know what they're talking about. In today's media it would be called fake news. Some people who spread this type of garbage construct a façade of credibility and can gather quite a following. The Bible encourages us to speak truth if we are going to tell something. Anything else borders on gossip. That's why it's so important to rely on information from our team regarding the search for or the identification of our new senior pastor. "These are things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace; do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the Lord" (Zechariah 8:16-17). Thank the Lord that our team has been so transparent with their reporting to the congregation from the pulpit and with written updates. They are doing their part. Here's the question – Are we doing ours by constantly and steadfastly praying for them and our next senior pastor?

Tuesday, May 7, 2024 - Wherever we are in the process of calling a new senior pastor, Satan is going to use every tactic he can to disrupt and turn our attention away from fervently praying for our church. We've been reminded that whether we have a senior pastor or not, we are to continue our mission of reaching the lost and developing the saved, beginning here and extending around the world. Because we're human we get distracted easily. It's nothing new. Remember Eve? In the beginning everything was perfect. Eve got distracted and the rest is history. There is so much going on around us that we can forget that God loves to hear from us. We might figure everybody else, or "somebody" is praying, so, I'm going to give God a break today with my prayers

for a new pastor or for the health of the church. "...if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, God listens to him." (John 9:31). When we lift our prayers in unison incredible things can happen. Prayer is the first line of attack against the resistance of the enemy. Peter and John had been released from prison and they gave a report to the people that the chief priests and elders had told them not to speak or teach about Jesus. "When the people heard this, "...they raised their voices together in prayer to God." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken." (Acts 4:24,31). When we pray together, we are asking God to show up among us because we need the comfort and assurance of His presence. Don't stop!

Wednesday, May 8, 2024 - The Bible says, "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). We can't imagine all that God has in store for us. It's not breaking news if you know Jesus as your Lord and Savior, that what we're experiencing in life, even in the best of times, on a personal level and as a church is not all there is. The best is yet to come. It's knowing what is waiting for us in eternity that gives us the hope and the courage and the strength to press on in this life. Because we love Him and put our faith in Him, we know that the Lord has prepared a senior pastor for us who will lead us in our next steps as the family of Englewood. In verse 10 of 1 Corinthians Chapter 2, Paul writes, "but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit." Until the Lord has revealed our next senior pastor, we know that the Holy Spirit will provide the comfort and guidance that we need as we move forward. There was a personal prayer in one of The Word for You Today daily devotionals that we can use as a community prayer by just changing one word - "me" to "us." Pray this as one voice, "Lord, show us what you want us to see, teach us what you want us to know, lead us step-by-step in the path of your perfect will." We might like to add, "in your perfect timing." The daily devotional ended with, "that's a prayer God will answer."

Thursday, May 9, 2024 - Let's explore this waiting thing a little more. None of us want to go to the hospital because most of the time if we must go it's under emergency conditions. If we drive ourselves, have someone else drive us, or ride in the back of an ambulance it seems like we'll never get there. Every light will be red, and we'll run up on every "Sunday" driver in the world out for a leisurely drive. It seems that way because whatever medical condition we might have that is causing us to seek medical attention at a hospital, we naturally view it as an emergency. So, when we get to the hospital, we must wait to see the doctor. But when we do get to see the doctor, one of the first things we want to know is, "When can I go home?" If we're honest, we don't like to wait for anything because we think of waiting as being passive. We've become a people who must have something to do. Even if it is just sitting behind some electronic device scrolling aimlessly, dreading what we must do next, or looking forward to a special event in our lives; we're still waiting. It's the waiting that frustrates us. Biblical waiting is a spiritual discipline that we have been practicing throughout this search for a new pastor. Biblical waiting requires patience, trust, faith, and belief that God is working on our behalf to provide us the best shepherd for Englewood. It's a discipline that we must practice through prayer. God is sovereign and nothing we are experiencing is out of His sight or out of His control. Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 7:13,14, "Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked? When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the

other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.” God is in control and will bring superior results out of our time of waiting.

Friday, May 10, 2024 - Waiting should not be a time of inaction. So often when we are in a period of waiting, we allow things to creep into our mind that cause worry that can turn into fear. Now, there's nothing wrong with fear. Fear of snakes is a good thing. Some of us were small children back in the 1960's. If you're a student of history, you'll remember what we now call the Cuban Missile Crisis. As a young child listening to the adults talk about what was going on, it seemed like the Russians and Cubans were standing outside the window of the house. The fear of the enemy coming through the window was palpable. Nighttime brought on an even greater fear. It was all imagined. It's a tool of our enemy - Satan. That's why waiting can't be a time of inaction. When Peter, the leader of the church, was imprisoned in Acts Chapter 1, the people didn't quit. The Bible says, “many people had gathered and were praying.” We must stay focused on the work of the Lord as we go through this time at Englewood. When we get the feeling that fear, or doubt is creeping in we should turn to Scripture and seek Him in prayer. That's why the Bible reminds us to seek Him earnestly, fervently, and constantly. Our minds don't get focused on the “what if's,” but rather on the “God will” when we seek Him through His word and prayer. “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation and be constant in prayer.” (Romans 12:12). When the rest of the world is panicking, the church should be praying. So, when the enemy feels like he's right outside your window, close your eyes and use the weapons that God has provided to neutralize the threat. It was called a blockade in the 1960's and it kept the Russian nuclear threat out of Cuba. We serve the One who has power to establish a blockade against all fear and doubt – it's called faith. A great hymn goes like this, “Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, Because He lives all fear is gone, Because I know He holds the future; And life is worth the living, just because He lives.”

Saturday, May 11, 2024 - We all know how David was described as a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22). But David showed us that there were times when he felt God did not hear him immediately. Psalm 27 is a fitting example of David pleading with the Lord, “Listen to my pleading, O Lord. Be merciful and answer me! My heart has heard you say, “Come and talk with me. And my heart responds, Lord I am coming.” (Psalm 27:7,8). When you read Psalm 27 you notice the marked change between the first and second half of the Psalm. You could say it is a Psalm recognizing the protecting nature of God ((Verses 1 - 3), the feeling of being alone without God (Verses 9- 12), the confidence in God's goodness (Verse 13) and the realization by David that his part in this whole circumstance is to wait on God (Verse 14). God hasn't gone anywhere, yet, like David, we sometimes feel like we're all alone in our circumstance or situation. In other words, we feel like we're in a pickle and it's getting more sour by the minute. But fear not, God still knows what's going on and better yet what is needed. David might have felt he was in a perfect storm, and He'd be right. Perfect in the way God is orchestrating this whole period of David's life. In David's pleading there are several “Do not” requests from David, “Do not hide, Do not reject, Don't leave, Don't abandon, Do not let me fall.” Like so many of the Psalms, the writers, after talking with God or taking some time to think about what they are saying come to the realization David did in Psalm 27, “Wait patiently for the Lord. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the Lord. (Psalm 27:14). David started this Psalm with two true statements, “The

Lord is my light and my salvation” and “The Lord protects me from danger.” Within the first two verses he asks himself two questions about his confident declaration - “...why should I be afraid...?” and “...why should I tremble?” David had already answered his own questions before he ever went off into the land of confusion in the middle of this Psalm. So, what’s the point? The answer is in tomorrow’s prayer prompt.

Sunday, May 12, 2024 - The point is that we always have the right answer, but we allow ourselves to wander off into a land of Oz, so to speak, where we play out all the scenarios in our mind of what might happen, rather than snuggling down into the realization that, “Even if my father and mother abandon me, the Lord will hold me close.” (Psalm 27:10). David after all the “what ifs” and “do nots,” realized that he was confident in one thing, that he would see the goodness of the Lord “in the land of the living” – this life. Verse 14 comes from a man who had experience in waiting. He knew what it meant to wait for the Lord. Anointed king at 16 but didn't become king until he was 30 years old. Imagine waiting 14 years to assume a role you've already have been identified for and appointed to. But you wait. Not easy to do, but essential to allow God to fulfill His plan. “I say to myself, “The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him. The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; It is good to wait quietly...” (Lamentations 3:24-26). Waiting is not easy. That may be why David reminded himself twice in Psalm 27:14, “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” We may still be waiting for a new senior pastor. But the reality of it is that we are always waiting for something in our personal life or corporately as a church. Even after who we’ve been waiting for arrives, we go into another waiting period for something else. God uses waiting to refresh, renew and yes teach us so that maybe we can answer our own questions (like David did) before we put ourselves in panic mode, only to get back to the realization that God is in control, if we just take some time to wait and seek Him. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thought than your thoughts.” (Isaiah 55:8,9). Waiting is inconvenient, we don’t like it, but when we stop to think about the events in our life, we can say that in times of waiting we have grown in our walk with the Lord. So, use this time to seek the Lord’s guidance and trust Him to act in His perfect timing.



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